

Stages and Minnesota Alternate Assessment

OVERVIEW

Stages includes two major software components: (a) informal assessment software and (b) curriculum software. Stages informal assessment software is instructional in nature, providing activities with constructive feedback and opportunities for the learner to explore and choose. Stages curriculum software is a collection of interactive daily instructional programs appropriate for learners at each Stage.

Stages software enhances the Minnesota's alternate assessment process because:

- 1. Stages aligns with the Minnesota Special Education Alternate Assessment items in Math (3rd Grade) and Reading.**
- 2. Stages generates records of learner performance.**
- 3. Stages provides learners with the opportunity for increased independence.**
- 4. Stages assists the learner's IEP team with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools.**

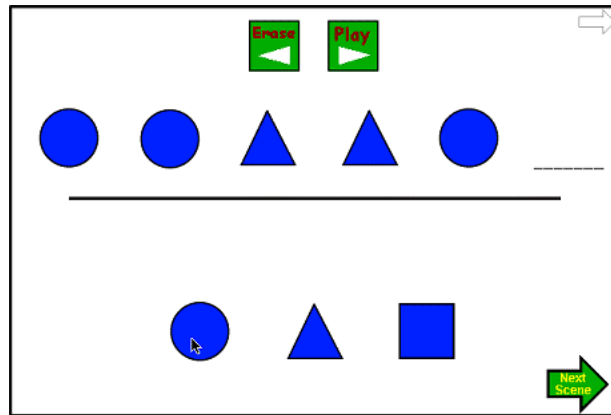
1. Stages aligns with the Minnesota Special Education Alternate Assessment items in Math (3rd Grade) and Reading.

Stages ensures meaningful and effective access to general curriculum areas for learners who require modifications in order to participate in statewide assessment. The learner's IEP team can also use Stages to help determine if alternate assessment is appropriate. Please refer to the section entitled "How Stages Correlates with Minnesota Special Education Alternate Assessment" for detailed matching to the alternate assessment items.

2. Stages generates records of learner performance.

During Stages software activities, the instructor can print directly from any screen to capture a learner-generated product as a benchmark. At the end of each activity, a report with instructional data about the time spent, choices made, response accuracy or work product, input method, prompt type, and time/date stamp are displayed with the learner's name. The instructor may wish to then print that screen or save the information as a text-format electronic file.

Observation guidelines and forms in the Stages kits help the instructional team make the most out of an activity session. The data-gathering features of the software enable the observer to focus on noting the learner's behavior and thinking-out-loud responses. Two adults from the instructional team can work together: one adult can encourage the learner and the other can note valuable data about behaviors without being noticed by the learner. Alternatively if a video or still camera is available, it may be directed at the learner and the computer monitor to discreetly record interactions and other behaviors while one adult coaches. During the sessions, the learner will be less conscious of her performance being recorded, making her responses more candid. Over time, the collected data will provide evidence that the instructional team needs to build a complete picture of the learner's skill achievement.



Example screen shot from Stage Four: Create Patterns

3. Stages provides learners with the opportunity for increased independence.

The feedback in Stages activities is encouraging and rewarding, providing a relaxed setting for exploring topics and demonstrating skills with minimal supervision. Many Stages activities include accessible choice-making opportunities. Functional skills activities include real-life community settings.

4. Stages assists the learner's IEP team with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools..

An objective of Stages software is to provide several options for input methods and other settings so that the learner's instructor, parents, and others in the IEP team can determine his ideal learning and communication environment. Different devices, auditory feedback, speeds and prompts are among the variables.

SUMMARY

Stages augments the Minnesota alternate assessment cycle for special education. The Stages software is a comprehensive benchmark tool to assist the instructional team in collecting valuable information on learner skill achievement, determine assessment strategy, and discover the learner's abilities and thinking approach.

How Stages Correlates with Minnesota Special Education Alternate Assessment¹

Math - 3rd Grade

Conceptual Understanding

Counts orally to 30 with proper number sequencing.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: Math Readiness: Counting

Stage Five: Problem Solving: Number Guess

- The learner counts familiar objects up to 10 in Stage Four *Counting*.
- Stage Five *Number Guess* applies the learner's knowledge of numbers to a deductive reasoning game.

Understands concepts of more, less, same and grouping.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: Math Readiness: Estimating

Stage Five: Problem Solving: Number Guess

- Stage Four *Estimating* gives the learner an opportunity to demonstrate understanding of math vocabulary such as 'more/less'.
- Stage Five *Number Guess* applies the learner's knowledge of numbers to a deductive reasoning game.

Procedural Skills

Using manipulatives can add with sums to 20.

Using manipulatives can subtract with differences less than 10.

Recognizes common symbols for addition, subtraction, multiplication, division [and equality].

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: Math: Math Facts (+, -, x, ÷), Word Problems (+, -, x, ÷)

- *Math Facts* includes addition and subtraction questions with and without regrouping. *Word Problems* includes problems with and without on-screen manipulatives to aid the learner.

Size, Shape and Measurement

Can tell time to the hour.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Six: Explore and Assess: Telling Time

- Stage Six *Telling Time* includes both digital and analog clocks.

¹ Information from Minnesota Special Education Alternate Assessment documents, (Accessed May 30, 2002).
Sources: http://cfl.state.mn.us/SPECED/AA/aa_index.html.

Can distinguish between a circle, a square and a triangle.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: Shape ID

- Stage Four *Shape ID* asks the learner to identify shapes in isolation and in scenes (drawings and photographs).

Organizing Skills

Can sort objects on the basis of one major characteristic (e.g. color, size, shape, etc.).

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: Problem Solving: Mystery Shape, Mystery Person

- The learner demonstrates reasoning skills by identifying a mystery object based on characteristics such as color and shape.

Can imitate or reproduce rhythms, rhymes and visual patterns.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: Math Readiness: Explore Patterns, Continue/Fill-In Patterns, Create Patterns

Stage Five: Reading: Sounds (Rhymes)

- Stage Four *Patterns* activities introduce the learner to patterns using shapes, color, and sound, have them continue patterns, and allow them to generate their own patterns.
- Simple rhyming sentence pairs are presented to the learner with animations in Stage Five *Sounds*. The learner then selects the rhyming words from a word wall.

Shape and Space

Identifies and describes common geometric shapes [and relationships] (e.g. circle, [cube,] triangles, [parallel, vertical]).

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: Shape ID

Stage Five: Math: Geometry

Problem Solving: Mystery Shape

- Stage Four *Shape ID* asks the learner to explore and identify ovals, circles, triangles, squares, and rectangles in scenes and in isolation.
- Stage Five *Geometry* includes computation of the area of rectangles. Learners compare shapes to solve for the *Mystery Shape* by elimination.

Computation With Whole Numbers

Can add: 2 digits + 2 digits.

Can subtract: 2 digits - 2 digits.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: Math: Math Facts (+, -)

- The learner uses an accessible number line to input the solution to these problems.

Conceptual Understanding: Number Sense

Can identify the fraction represented in a visual display.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: *Math:* Fractions

- Familiar objects and groups of objects on the screen serve as virtual manipulatives in this activity.

Measurement

Given a set of bills and coins, can total the amount of money (e.g. 2 dimes, 1 quarter and 3 pennies = \$0.48)

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Six: *Assess:* Counting Money, Money Equivalents

- Money questions are combined with real-life scenarios in these activities.

Reading

Pre-Reading Skills

Names upper and lower case letters when presented with visual letter prompts.
Orally produces rhyming words.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: *Reading Readiness:* Letter ID

Stage Five: *Reading:* Sounds (Rhyming)

- Stage Four presents the learner with letters using simple animations.
- Stage Five *Sounds* highlights spelling patterns to emphasize the rhyming final sounds of words. The activity gives the learner short rhyming sentence pairs with simple animations. The screen displays text while audio plays. The learner then has a chance to identify the rhyming word pairs from a word wall.

Decoding

Given a visual prompt, produces associated single consonant sounds in initial, medial and final positions.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: *Reading Readiness:* Letter Sounds

- The same words from *Letter ID* are used to show the beginning letter and its sound in *Letter Sounds*.

Vocabulary

Correctly recognizes fewer than 100 sight words from Dolch or Fry lists (score 1 or 2).

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: *Reading:* Meaning

- Five sets of Dolch words are included in this activity at increasing levels of difficulty.

Fluency: Oral Reading

Reads developmentally appropriate materials at a rate of less than 70 words per minute with less than 90 percent accuracy and less than 80 percent comprehension (score 1 or 2).

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Six: *Stories:* Cody, Mitchell, Meg, Adam, Ryan

- Stage Six *Stories* are illustrated short passages showing real people doing daily activities. The short passages in *Stories* can be audio-only, text-only, or both (multisensory).